

Socialist Standard

Official Journal of Socialist Party of Gt Britain and World Socialist Party of Ireland

FEBRUARY 1966

in this issue

NATIONALISATION THE POST OFFICE Nationalisation's problem child KEYNESIAN MYTH

pages 19-24

STATE POWER

visitors are cordially invited to every meeting

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NOTTINGHAM 1st Sunday in month (6th Feb.) at 3.30 pm in the Committee Room, Co-operative Hall, Heathcote Street, Nottingham. Enquiries: G. Hallam, 14 Church Drive, Carrington, Nottingham.

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SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN holds:

1] That Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2] That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

3] That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4] That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

5] That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6] That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7] That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working-class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8] The SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Those agreeing with the above principles and desire enrolment in the Party should apply for membership form to secretary of nearest branch or at Head Office.

Aspects of State Power

February 1966 Vol 62 No 738

Socialist Standard

Journal of the Socialist Party
of Great Britain and the World
Socialist Party of Ireland



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SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE meets every Tuesday at the SPGB Head Office, 52, Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4 at 7.30 p.m.

Orders for LITERATURE should be sent to the Literature Department, SPGB, at the above address.

CORRESPONDENCE for the Executive Committee should be sent to the General Secretary, SPGB, 52, Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4 (Telephone: Macaulay 3811).

Letters containing POSTAL ORDERS etc. should be sent to E. LAKE, SPGB, at the above address. Postal orders and cheques should be crossed and made payable to the SPGB.

Articles, correspondence, notices of meetings, etc., for the SOCIALIST STANDARD should be sent to the Socialist Standard Production Committee, 52, Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.

WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF IRELAND

The EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE meets 4th Sunday of each month at the Head Office, 5, Granville Buildings, 53, High Street, Belfast 1, at 3.30 p.m.

"The State is the people" is a popular misconception that lives on. It is still widely held that the State embodies the whole community. The illusion is fostered that it is "our" country, "our" government, "our" balance of payment crisis.

In fact the country is owned by a privileged minority. Exports are *their* problem. Inevitably the government administers *their* interests through control of the state machine.

The State is the armed forces, the police, the judiciary, the prisons. These exist to defend and maintain private property. The State also administers the Post Office, schools, hospitals, railways, etc.

Over the past hundred years government has grown enormously. Today it is accepted that the government will be directly concerned in every aspect of social and economic life. At the same time its power is more centralised.

This is not to say that the government can exercise its power in an arbitrary way. On the contrary government today must be tuned in with public opinion. Never before has the success of a politician been so dependent on his saying the right thing at the right time. Election programmes are largely the product of advertising men. This is partly why the manifestos of Labour and Tory parties hardly differ. In practice government policies bear little relation to electoral promises.

The Labour Party sees the state machine as an instrument of social progress -- provided they control it. The illusion of nationalisation as an egalitarian system of ownership and distribution is now obvious by bitter experience. Under Labour as well as Tory governments state controlled industry is run in the interests of the capitalist class.

Nationally the State protects the interests of capitalism, and in doing so frequently has to over-ride sectional capitalist interests.

Two aspects of state administration which concern most people are education and health. The State cannot provide a proper education system because it is primarily concerned to train workers. Capitalist society creates more ill health than doctors and nurses can cope with. What the State provides is limited by the economics of a society that is concerned more for profits than for people.

The abolition of class divisions

We have seen how the whole structure of present-day or any other society, rests upon and takes its shape from the property base; and now we can proceed to consider what, broadly, must be the result of the carrying out of the Socialist proposal to change the social base from private ownership of the means necessary to satisfy the economic needs of the community to one in which these things are owned and controlled by the whole people.

The first and most important effect must be to abolish class distinctions. Just as, when the needs of gaining a livelihood have only reached such a stage that common ownership in the land was the only form of ownership that was useful to either the community or the individual, and therefore the only form that was possible in the circumstances (i.e. when the chase offered the highest reward to human product activity), there were no class divisions, so in the society arising from the new social base there could be no classes. Where property is owned by some only of the people, those who own are marked off from those who do

not; they are a class apart, and their interests are to try their utmost to maintain and increase the advantage which their property gives them over the property-less. In the nature of things, these endeavours are more effective if carried out collectively, hence they harden into class effort to support class interests.

But when all these things necessary for the well-being of the community cease to belong to individuals, but are owned as a single individual instrument of production and distribution by the whole people as an organic unit, none are possessors and none have any advantage over others. Since all are in the same situation, all have the same interests, namely to make the means of gaining the common livelihood serve with the utmost efficiency the common purpose. Society, therefore, so long rent by class divisions founded upon unequal property conditions, at once loses its class nature with the abolition of private property, and being classless, there can be no class interests.

Nationalisation—the turning point

IT is now clear that the Labour Party's attitude to nationalisation resembles that of a woman towards her husband after she has seen him for the first time without his false teeth and wig.

Labours' love affair, and the subsequent honeymoon, lasted a long time. In a past which it would prefer to forget, it has declared for nationalisation of, among other things, banking and credit, water, agriculture, iron and steel, shipping and shipbuilding, chemicals and insurance. At their 1934 Conference Herbert Morrison advocated a programme of persistent nationalisation "... until within a reasonable time we are substantially masters of the economic fabric of the community and the means of production and distribution". And of course there is the famous Clause Four, still there in the Labour Party Constitution, which is a commitment to nationalise all British industry and commerce.

They were heady days, when Labour leaders often spoke with the delirium which comes from spending too much time out of power. Since then, their ardour has declined; the 1945 government pushed through nine major nationalisation Acts and the list of candidates for state control has now dwindled into almost nothing.

Those nine Acts of the Attlee government were the high spot for nationalisation. Labour Party propaganda during the 1945 election was clear about the intention to nationalise, although it put special emphasis on the coal mines—and with good reason. It was easy enough to prove that the miners had suffered under the private owners; the Labour Party drove the point home with plenty of pictures of idle mining villages and unemployed miners picking on slag heaps for scraps of coal. The implication behind this was that the way to solve unemployment in the coal industry was to nationalise the mines. (This was still Labour's case in 1959, when their election manifestos claimed "The nationalised industries are one of the country's main defences against unemployment.") Subsequent events have shown up this line of propaganda for what it is.

Labours' 1945 election machine faced obvious difficulties in putting a similar case for taking over other industries. There were, for example, no authentic old photographs of starving clerks from the Bank of England raking with their umbrellas among the dustbins of City restaurants. It was very hard to stir anyone's emotions over nationalising the Bank and in any case as the late Lord Pethwick Lawrence, who was a member of the Labour government, put it, it was "... already very largely a department of the Treasury and its nationalisation will not make a pennyworth of difference to the bulk of the people . . ."

But however little the difference it made, the Attlee government pushed on and by 1951 the State had taken control of the Bank of England and of Civil Aviation, Coal, Cable and Wireless, Transport, Land Development Rights, Electricity, Gas and Iron and Steel. The programme had been fulfilled. We had, apparently, at last reached the Promised Land which Labour pioneers had sung and worked and suffered for.

In all the excitement, it was inevitable that certain facts should escape popular attention. In the first place, the Labour Party had no patent on nationalisation. Even in 1945, there were plenty of State-run concerns to testify to this fact. Some were like the Post Office, the public houses and the brewery in Carlisle, and the B.O.A.C., which were all examples of complete nationalisation carried out by a Conservative government. Others were cases where the State

had a powerful influence, as in the British investments (again the work of Conservative and Liberal governments) in the Suez Canal and the (then) Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. As the Industrial Editor of *The Guardian* once put it, "... public control in 1947 was nothing new."

Secondly, the real emotive for nationalising certain industries had nothing to do with the conditions of the people who worked in them. The Reid Report on the mines, published in 1945, pointed to British industry's dependence on coal, and to the poor state of the mines under private companies. It also showed how the separate control of many collieries prevented valuable coal seams from being worked to the full, and how the old coal masters could not hope to invest the massive amounts of money the mines needed to put them on their feet.

What this amounted to was the industrialists of Britain in 1945 needed coal desperately and, whether it was by nationalisation under a Labour government or by State control from the Conservatives, they were going to get it. After nationalisation, enormous amounts of money were pumped into the State industries. A National Coal Board publication—*The Root of It All*—of 1950 said that it was then proposed to invest some £520 millions in the mines. In other spheres it has been the same story: in 1964 the nationalised electricity industry was investing enough money in its equipment to build the Channel Tunnel every ten weeks. By 1967 it plans to be using up £2 millions every day.

The hunger of the massive, basic industries for capital is, still one of the arguments used to justify State control. The White Paper on the steel industry published last May said:

The iron and steel industry occupies a focal and dominating position in the British economy . . . A single new large integrated works may cost £150 million . . . There are difficulties in raising private funds for projects of this sort which take many years to complete and which, when completed, have to go through a long commissioning period before they can earn a return on capital sufficient to attract private enterprise.

The gratitude which the capitalist class feel for all that the state concerns are doing for them was expressed by Lord Chandos, who was once a Minister in a Conservative government, when he spoke up on 8th January, 1962:

Nationalisation of a fairly substantial sector of industry has come to stay . . . As an industrialist I want cheap fuel and reliable supplies and I believe that with a little more working together that is what (the National Coal Board) will secure for us.

Now it is reasonable to say that, if the nationalisation which the 1945 Labour government introduced had had the effects which they promised (perhaps expected, even), if it had indeed opened the road to the Promised Land, then the Labour Party would have had every reason to make it a larger and larger part of their election programme, for it would be one of the greatest vote-catchers ever.

But the opposite has happened. Nationalisation of the land has gone forever; it is not even discussed any more at Labour Conferences. At one election after another, the nationalisers' shopping list has grown shorter. In 1955 it covered only steel, road haulage and sections of the chemical and machine tools industries. By 1964 this had shrunk to steel and water supply. And now it is clear that, despite the government's hand-on-heart declarations, steel nationalisation is all but forgotten. There was no mention of it in

the last Queen's Speech; as James Margach wrote in the *Sunday Times* of 9th January last, "... the Steel Nationalisation Bill is further away than ever."

Whatever this retreat proves about the Labour Party's readiness to abandon what it once called its cherished principles, there should be no regret at the passing of nationalisation. It had little to offer the people who get their living in the State industries; "... the Postmaster General," wrote a postman's wife to the *Manchester Guardian* (6.5.54), "Gets the most important work done by almost slave pay and labour." At the time that letter was published, the National Coal Board was also doing its best to dispel any delusions about the Promised Land by claiming damages of over £60,000 from some miners who had been on unofficial strike.

The Labour Party's claim that nationalisation is a defence against unemployment has been defeated by the widespread cuts by British Rail, and by the National Coal Board's programme of closing pits and sacking workers. Only half as many pits are working today as there were when the National Coal Board took over; since 1957 the number of miners has been cut from 700,000 to 450,000 and the number of clerical and administrative staff has been reduced by ten thousand. More cuts are planned.

Many workers in the mines and the railways have been sand-bagged by the cuts, as well they might be. In 1956 the National Coal Board was planning to employ 672,000 miners by 1965 and to be producing 250 million tons of coal by 1970. But the rapid contraction of the market for coal, under pressure from other fuels, has left the industry fighting desperately for a 1970 production quota of 170/180 million tons under the National Plan and has forced it to cut its work force.

The reason for this is that nationalisation does nothing to solve the economic and social problems of capitalism. State industries have to employ workers, and to dispute with them over their pay and conditions. They also have to sell their products, often in competition with other industries in this country or with those abroad. They are, in other words, just as dependent on the anarchies of capitalism's markets as private industry. The class division of society remains unaffected by nationalisation; indeed, Labour spokesmen continue to make propaganda out of the fact that, in the words of one of them, "One per cent. of the population stills owns about 50 per cent. of the nation's wealth,"—as if this was

not one of the problems nationalisation was supposed to solve.

It would be foolish to pretend that the decline in support for nationalisation is due to a widespread appreciation of these facts. Many workers passionately believe that the highest form of industry is a profitable one and, equally misguided, think that State industries fail to make profits. In fact, these industries often make large profits from the exploitation of their workers but their obligation to provide for fixed interest payments also often turns a working surplus into an accounting deficit. In 1962, for example, when the National Coal Board declared a deficit of over £13 million, Lord Robens pointed out that had they been a "normal commercial company" the mines would have declared a dividend of 2½ per cent.

The result of all this is that nationalisation has become something of an embarrassment to the Labour Party, connecting it in the voters' minds with trains which are dirty and late, or coal which is scarce or electricity which is dear. A Colin Hurry poll in 1959 claimed that 63.5 per cent. of the electorate was opposed to more nationalisation, and that 30.7 per cent. of Labour voters also thought that way. An Aims of Industry poll in 1964 concluded that 49.7 per cent. of the electorate, and 23 per cent. of Labour voters, were against nationalisation in principle.

The present seems, then, to be something of a turning point. The British capitalist class are now clear that nationalisation has gone far enough and that there must be no more of it for political reasons. At the same time, they recognise that it is in their interests for the State to have a say in important industries like iron and steel. Future state intervention will probably be in the form recommended by the Plowden Committee for the aircraft industry, with the government acquiring large or majority shareholdings, bringing off mergers—or perhaps break-ups—and generally having a say in the policies of industries which affect the fortunes of British capitalism as a whole.

Nationalisation was once offered as a cure-all, as the road to prosperity. Since then it has been replaced as speechwriter's favourite by Science and Technology. How long will it take before this, too, is exposed as another sham designed to cover up the fact that there is no way of solving our problems short of changing society?

IVAN

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Nationalisation's problem child

THE British Post Office, oldest of the Nationalised industries and at one time the favourite child of the enthusiasts for Nationalisation, is now under heavy fire. Its critics can find nothing good to say about it: the charges are too high; postal, telegraph, telephone and counter services are all said to be bad and getting worse. Correspondence to the Press and questions in Parliament are full of complaints of delayed transmission of letters, too few collections and deliveries, telephone waiting lists, wrong numbers and overloaded lines, parcels held up or strayed and so on.

Some of the criticisms are reasonable; most are wrongly directed; and some are simply dishonest, like the tongue-in-the-cheek Editorials about the discontinuance of Christmas Day deliveries, in newspapers which in England this year missed publication for three days on end. The same newspapers, most of which were sold at a Penny in 1939 and now cost fourpence for a smaller issue, think they are entitled to condemn the letter rate although at fourpence it is less than three times the pre-war penny halfpenny. The critics have their suggested remedies, including straight denationalisation, splitting the posts from the telegraphs and telephones, and handing both over to boards like those operating the railways and mines. In the meantime the Post Office itself has its organisation under independent critical examination, and the Parliamentary Committee on Nationalised industries also has the Post Office on its agenda.

All of which must make sad reading for the older enthusiasts for Nationalisation in the Labour Party and ILP, who campaigned for years on behalf of the Post Office as the best of all possible organisations, as the guiding light for all-round State ownership and indeed as the example of Socialism itself. Only the SPGB is not, and never has been, in these struggles over issues totally irrelevant from the Socialist standpoint. The Nationalisers were wrong at the start, and the developments of capitalism have overwhelmed them, made nonsense of their prophecies and reduced them to their present state of confusion.

Some Nationalisers never imagined that Nationalisation had anything to do with the Socialist aim of getting rid of capitalism and inaugurating a Socialist system in which the means of production would be the common property of society and in which goods would be produced and services operated solely for use, without rent, interest and profit, without buying and selling: for them Nationalisation was merely a way, a supposedly better way, of running capitalism. They thought it would be so efficient and profitable that it would compete private enterprise out of existence and be universally accepted as the normal form.

The late A. Emil Davies, Chairman of the Railway Nationalisation Society was one of these. In his *The State in Business*, first published in 1914 and issued in a second edition in 1920, he thought his battle was well on the way to victory: One of his beliefs was that "it is apparently only a question of a year or two" before the American Government would take over the American telephone companies. Not only have the American telephones not been Nationalised (well over half the world's telephones are still operated by private companies) but the battle-cry of the de-Nationalisers in Britain is "Why can't we have a telephone service as widely developed and efficient as the American?" But it really has little to do with the sterile controversy about the supposed merits and de-merits of State versus private capitalism. Much more important is whether, as in America, investors' money has been readily available for telephone development, or

whether, as in Britain successive governments, until quite recent years, were not able or willing to provide it. Russia, for the same reason, is even further down the scale of telephone development but in Brazil the opposite is true. The private company has not been able to raise money from investors and the Brazilian government, as reported in the Times (23.12.65), is nationalising the telephones precisely in order to speed up expansion.

What nearly all the critics of the British Post Office forget is that in a quarter century of inflation and rising prices, Nationalised industries were no more able to operate profitably without raising charges than were private companies. They also overlook the fact that in a period of low unemployment, and of absolute shortage of labour in some areas, the Post Office, like other services requiring Saturday and Sunday work and awkward attendances, cannot well compete with five-day jobs, often better paid, in factories: the Post Office had no such problems when unemployment ranged up above the million level.

Some of the early campaigners for Nationalisation, unlike the "non-political" Emil Davies, thought they were striking a blow for Socialism. Because they could not see early success in winning over the working class for Socialism, they supported State enterprise because they thought it would provide a simple centralised organisation easy for eventual incorporation into Socialist society. Their error was in forgetting that the work of gaining a Socialist majority was not helped but made more difficult by the confusion they created.

They were driven into one contradiction after another. Having claimed that Nationalisation is Socialist and that the Post Office form of it is the proper one they had to explain away how it was that Tory and Liberal Government nationalised the telegraphs and telephones and that it was Gladstone (at that time Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer) who in 1844 got Parliament to pass the first Act giving the Government power to nationalise the railways.

They failed to understand the role Nationalisation played in capitalism, and that it is one of the ways in which the general body of capitalists protects their interests against sections of their own class who, through monopoly or through concentration in the most profitable areas and neglect of the others, hold the general body to ransom. Gladstone in 1844 understood this quite well. The railways, as the most efficient means of transport, were indispensable to manufacturers and traders, and Gladstone's Act was meant as a threat to them that unless they refrained from exploiting their monopoly the Government would take them over. Posts, telegraphs and telephones presented a special aspect of the same problem. Private organisations were quite willing to operate in the profitable urban areas but had no interest in providing the nation-wide service which industry and commerce needed. Churchill had the same idea in mind in 1943 when he spoke of "a broadening field for State ownership and enterprise, especially in relation to monopolies of all kinds" (Times 5.4.43).

The same purpose, that of protecting the interests of the general body of capitalists, is aimed at in America by the anti-trust laws and by the Government's control over telephone and other charges through the Federal Communications Commission, and in Britain by the anti-monopoly laws and laws against re-sale price maintenance.

But capitalist interests are divided and the sections adversely affected by anti-monopoly laws or by Nationalisation fight back. The manufacturers of telephone equipment

have long campaigned to get the telephones freed from direct government control. They believe that the desire of governments to use the Post Office as a means of raising revenue has been a cause of starving the telephones of money needed for expansion and that if this control were removed a big new demand would open up for their products: they look with envy at the much greater telephone developments in USA and elsewhere.

In the Nineteen-thirties they found allies in the leaders of the Labour Party who also turned away from Government department Nationalisation. So then we had Lord Attlee, a former Postmaster General and later to be Labour Prime Minister, discovering that the "socialist" Post Office was "the outstanding example of collective capitalism" (*New Statesman* 7.11.31). The campaign was led by the late Lord Morrison who advocated a form of organisation like that in the Port of London Authority though he had himself in 1923 described the same PLA as "a capitalist Soviet . . . the constitution of which is thoroughly objectionable from the Labour and Socialist point of view." The late Mr. Lees-Smith who had been Postmaster General in a Labour Government, also, in 1931, wanted "the Post Office, or at least the telephones under a public corporation like the Port of London Authority." He, like Attlee, had discovered that this was "the latest development in socialist theory."

Post Office Act, 1961

The Post Office survived that campaign to get it away from direct governmental and parliamentary control but in recent years, following the setting-up of the Boards for railways, mines, gas and electricity, steps have been taken in the same direction for the Post Office.

The Post Office Act 1961 was intended to make the Post Office into a "commercial undertaking," and free it to a large extent from the direct financial and other control by the Exchequer. Now further changes are likely, thus completing a series of adaptations of the Post Office to the needs of capitalism; from the earliest phase when it was an organisation for conveying "the King's Posts," and the period when it was simply a means of raising revenue for the Government; and the era after the Penny Post of 1840 in which the purpose was both to raise revenue and to be a communications service for industry and commerce.

It is at present required to aim at an 8 per cent. profit on invested capital, but always some profit has been expected. As a Select Committee ruled in 1888 "it is most likely to continue to be conducted satisfactorily if it should

also continue to be conducted with a view to profit, as one of the Revenue yielding Departments of the State." (Which has its echo in Russia to-day where the economist Leontiev, wrote in *Pravda* of "the commonly accepted necessity of a sharp increase in the role of profit as the most general indicator of the effectiveness of a factory's work"—quoted in the *Observer* 4.4.65).

It was one of the illusions of the early Labour Party and ILP advocates of Nationalisation that when the government took over an industry they would have access to enormous profits and could benefit the workers by paying above average wages to their own employees and by reducing charges and running the industry purely as a "public service" without profit.

The idea was encouraged by the original intention to take over the industries without compensation and as late as 1925 this was still being debated at an ILP conference where it was opposed by, among others, Attlee and by Dalton who was to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. The dilemma they were in was that the Government which confiscates one lot of investments will immediately find that capitalists will cease to invest in any other security liable to confiscation, and a government administering capitalism constantly needs to raise money from investors. Having then decided that they must compensate the former shareholders they ran into the next dilemma—that when they have a declining industry on their hands they still have to meet the compensation payments. In private hands the investor in, say, a coal mine simply loses his money if the mine goes bankrupt, but the government's liability to meet interest payments on the Government stocks given to former mine owners continues even if all the mines are closed.

As regards the supposed possibility of helping the workers through lower prices (even if the lower prices had been practicable) the Labour leaders overlooked the fact that wage levels themselves largely follow price movements. And the idea of paying Government employees more than other workers was equally remote from reality.

In short their understanding of the only means of achieving Socialism—by the conscious act of a Socialist majority displacing the capitalist social system was as lacking as their real understanding of how capitalism works. So it took over forty years of experience to land them in the present position, of having abandoned all their early ideals and misconceptions only to accept instead all the traditional rules about how capitalism has to be run.

As far as they are concerned the idea of there being a real alternative to capitalism, a Socialist social system, is gone and forgotten.

R.S.

NEWS FROM THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF IRELAND

"We distributed 30,000 copies of our Election Statement in eight areas of Belfast, in Derry, Armagh, Newry, Portadown, Lurgan, Larne, Carrickfergus and Lisburn. This was the widest and biggest distribution of a single Socialist statement in Ireland.

We also distributed 300 copies of 'Comment'. This activity took its toll of Party funds. Had it not been for the generous help of the SPGB it would not have been possible to campaign on such a large scale. But at least on this occasion all

the money was spent on actual propaganda and did not find its way into government funds in a lost deposit! We are now recovering and have plans for producing a new leaflet for 'follow-up' distribution in the areas where we put the Election Statement."

The Keynesian myth

SOCIALISTS have always held that the boom-slump cycle and periodical unemployment are inherent features of the system of production for the market with a view to profit i.e. capitalism. But, say the critics, there has been full employment in Britain for over 20 years; there has been no slump on the scale of the 1930's. Marx, they say, has been proved wrong. Capitalism has changed, thanks to the theories and policies of John Maynard Keynes.

Keynes was a British economist who died just after the last war. He wrote a number of widely-read books on economic and political matters and held various government posts. His theories on how to get full employment and avoid slumps are to be found in his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* which appeared in 1936.

The economic doctrines Keynes attacked in this book taught that capitalism automatically led to the full and most efficient use of productive resources. These doctrines said that unemployment was to be explained either by over-population or by restrictions on production and trade, such as trade unions, State interference and tariffs. Overproduction was impossible as "supply creates its own demand". This last dogma was known as Say's Law after a French economist of the early 19th century. Say argued that as every sale was a purchase and vice versa a shortage of purchasing power was impossible.

Keynes denied that *laissez-faire* capitalism automatically led to full employment and went on to show how over-production and unemployment could occur: since all that was produced in a given period wasn't all consumed in that period there was a gap between productive capacity and what Keynes called Consumption. This gap was filled by the making of means of production or Investment. However as Investment depends on what businessmen think are the chances of making profits there is no guarantee that this gap will be filled. And if it is not filled then there will be idle resources and unemployment.

Keynes suggested ways of overcoming this condition. The State should first try to encourage Consumption and Investment. As the poor tend to spend a larger proportion of their income than the rich, one way of encouraging spending, Keynes suggested, was to redistribute some of the income of the rich to the poor. Low interest rates might encourage businessmen to invest so a policy of reducing the price of money by increasing its supply was called for. Keynes believed that although these measures were useful they would not be enough. In the end the State itself would have to increase its own spending and even take steps to control Investment directly.

In overthrowing Say's Law, Keynes was doing nothing new. Marx had done this before when he pointed out that, although Say was right about every sale being a purchase because the buyer and seller were different people, the seller could interrupt circulation if for any reason he didn't re-spend the money immediately. Thus both Marx and Keynes showed how overproduction was possible under capitalism. Marx went further and showed how it was also inescapable.

The basic proposition of the Keynesians comes to this: steady growth at full employment level can be kept if the State controls spending and investment so that when a boom is developing it cuts down, and when a slump threatens it increases its spending.

Keynes had been a critic of *laissez-faire* for a long time before he wrote his *General Theory*. He was a member of

the Liberal Party and sympathetic to the kind of State capitalist schemes the Fabians pushed. When he wrote this book he already had an international reputation as a leading economist. His book was given wide publicity because in it a well-known economist provided a theoretical justification for policies already being tried in the 1930's. Keynes's theories and policies—equalizing taxation, cheap money, State control—were eagerly spread by the Labour Party and "progressives" generally. After all, this was what they—and Keynes himself, for that matter—had long been advocating. Helped by these partisans Keynesian economics has become the dominant theory. In Britain it completely conquered the universities and government departments. In America some conservative economists are still fighting a rearguard action on behalf of *laissez-faire* against Keynes's theories which they see as State capitalism (to them "socialism").

It is true that Keynesian economics is a theory of State capitalism. It is a theory that capitalism can be managed by professional economists from Government departments. It is Fabianism in a new guise: capitalism run by "experts".

In Britain the first Keynesian budget was that of 1940 so the "experts" have been in charge for over 25 years. How have they fared? Have they been able to control capitalism?

Under capitalism the market is the king; it decides what is produced and when. After the last war there was an expansion of the world market which, with a few minor upsets, has continued ever since. It is this expansion of the world market rather than State control which has been the major factor in the relatively full employment in some parts of the world.

This particular combination of circumstances has allowed the Keynesians to claim as the benefits of their "economic management" what in fact are the results of world market conditions favourable to the capitalists of the countries concerned. The world market has not expanded at a steady rate; it has done so in fits and jerks. This, of course, is the boom-slump cycle. In Britain the figures of unemployment, industrial production and trade have gone up and down with the world market—and the "experts" have been unable to do anything about it. Indeed far from these "experts" controlling capitalism it is the other way round: the Keynesians seated in their government offices have had to take orders from the world market. Given a contraction of the world market on a large-scale the emptiness of the claims of the Keynesians to control capitalism, and especially its boom-slump cycle, would become apparent immediately.

Nor have the "experts" been able to end unemployment. In many parts of the world unemployment is widespread, in the Caribbean and Mediterranean areas to mention just two. Keynesians have been unable to do anything about this. Some of their thinkers have admitted this and call the unemployment in these areas "Marxian" as opposed to the "Keynesian" unemployment they can cure. Very clever! as if this unemployment wasn't connected with the relatively full employment elsewhere. For these unemployed are the reserve army of labour Marx talked about. They are drawn on by industries in the dominant capitalist countries as and when required to produce for the world market.

Keynsian economics—a combination of a policy of "inflation" and the rule of economic "experts"—is not at all what it is made out to be. It has not, and cannot, control capitalism in the ways that it claims.

Significance of Tashkent

The real significance of the talks at Tashkent had nothing to do with the dramatic death of Mr. Shastri, even though this did provide the press with copy for a lot of articles representing the man who had carried out India's warlike foreign policy as a veritable Dove of Peace.

We are used to such mush by now. What really mattered about Tashkent was that it was the Soviet Union which called the two sides together and which, when the talks looked like breaking down, spared no effort to get an agreement.

The final communiqué mentioned the two leaders' "deep appreciation and gratitude" to the Russian negotiators, and well it might. But the Soviet too, should have given their thanks to somebody, because their intervention in the dispute was anything but coincidental and was inspired by anything but concern for the security of other countries.

It is clear that Russia's interest in pacifying the Indian continent arises from its struggle with China. It would be disastrous for Moscow if the Indo/Pakistan conflict were to get out of hand; apart from anything else, the continuing clash between these two countries gives

China an opportunity to sign "peace pacts" with one or the other, perhaps to send "volunteers" to fight there.

On the other hand, a stable India, friendly to Russia, forms a very important part of a defensive cordon around China. Who is to say that one day there will not be Russian missile bases in India, trained on Chinese cities?

Now the truly striking thing about all this is that Russia has been allowed to intervene, and to exert considerable influence, without any protest from, indeed with the encouragement of, the Western powers.

Only a few years ago this situation would have brought the two sides in the Cold War close to a shooting match. And only a little farther back the same situation was a persistent nightmare of British Foreign Secretaries, obsessed as they had to be with the priority of keeping Russia out of India, and so denying her an outlet to the rich markets, plantations and mines of the Far East.

Times, as they say, have changed. British Imperialism was once thought to be the greatest possible threat to the world's peace. There was certainly plenty of evidence of its ruthlessness, and of

NEWS IN REVIEW

the deaths and troubles it caused. This led many people to assume that the end of the British Empire would mean a safer, happier world.

Yet now that this has happened, now that Britain calmly looks on while its old adversary walks into an area over which bitter wars were once fought, what has happened to the peace of the world?

We are threatened with greater and more terrifying wars than ever. There is as much, if not more, tension in the world than there ever was. There are still great power blocs, confronting each other over the markets and the raw materials of the world.

The reason for this is simple. The wars of capitalism are not caused by any particular line-up of powers, nor by the dominance of any one country. They are caused by the basic nature of capitalism itself, which cannot help but divide the world into competing units.

The dream of the old-time Indian nationalists may have been realised, and the nightmare of the old-time English Foreign Office have come true. But the black and fearsome reality of capitalism—which is neither a dream nor a nightmare—remains with us all the time.

More murders

Ever since the abolition of the death penalty, a careful watch has been kept on the murder statistics by those people who think that the only fit and just fate for a murderer is to be hanged by the neck, alone and ignominiously, until he be dead.

The Home Office figure for crimes provisionally classed as murder during the first nine months of 1965 was 185; on this basis, and with a little statistical juggling, and with a little emotion roused by admittedly rousing cases such as the "Murder on the Moors" trial, some sections of the popular press have published the conclusion that since the Silverman Bill became law murderers are running riot.

In fact, the figures prove nothing of the kind. The provisional figure for murders need bear no relation to the figure of crimes which are finally recorded as such. (In 1959, for example the provisional and final figures were 192 and 141—in 1960 217 and 135.)

So a higher provisional figure for 1965 does not necessarily mean that the final

number of cases of murder will turn out higher. The provisional figure can be affected by all sorts of influences, not the least of which is a concern on the part of the police for public and parliamentary interest in the matter.

If the murder statistics—for this country and for others, and for any period—prove anything it is that the death penalty has no influence in the matter. Punishing a murderer does nothing to help his victim, neither does it safeguard the future victims of other killers.

This can be extended to other crimes. There is no call to be particularly sympathetic to the criminal, who after all is making the best of a particularly bad world for himself, much as any law-abiding bank clerk. But facts are facts.

Severe punishment—the cat, the birch, the hangman's rope—has no effect on crime. A book published some time ago (*The Courage of His Convictions*, by Tony Parker and Robert Allerton) drove this point home.

But at the same time, it pointed out that the go-soft-on-the-criminal school

was equally wrong. They merely disgusted the criminal, who preferred to know where he stood rather than be patronised and manipulated.

The effect to beat down the criminal by punishment, or to talk him round with kindness, has taken up a lot of society's time and energy. And in the result the crime figures go up, or down, quite unaffected by the methods which are used to deal with the problem.

In the process, a lot of favourite theories on both sides of the argument have been discredited. Most have been replaced by other, equally discreditable, theories.

The fact is that modern crime has its roots in modern capitalist society. Areas like Harlem, or the Gorbals, are a standing incentive to crime, because the best way to survive there is on your wits, and to strike first and talk afterwards.

Add to this the fact that capitalist society is one of privilege, where possession counts for everything, and you have the start of an explanation of, and therefore a cure for, the mass of crime which is

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such a problem all over the world today.

Whatever conclusions the criminologists reach over the new murder figures,

and whether the death penalty comes back or not, of one thing we can be sure. Without an understanding of capitalism,

and of the problems it causes, crime will continue to flourish unhealthily in our midst.

Labour waves the big stick

Mr. Ray Gunter, who has always prided himself on his affection for blunt speaking, opened the New Year in characteristic style.

Up and down the country he went, making speeches with but a single theme:

We must find a means of making the country understand that we can spend only what we earn . . . (Blackburn, 5th January)

We as a nation are living beyond our means (Ilford, 8th January)

The reason for Mr. Gunter's panic was, as we all know, that we are all living much too luxuriously, taking wages which are far too high, doing hardly any work in return, spending long holidays abroad and so on.

So Mr. Gunter and his colleagues speak up, treading a path well worn by previous Labour Ministers. But really, they have little to complain about. There is one thing they are forgetting.

It is now Labour Party policy to wave an enormous stick over workers' heads in the matter of wage increases: "If we cannot or will not match our productivity to our spending," threatened Mr. Gunter, "Unemployment will arise."

Now the Labour Party always claimed that it was the Tories who would have to use threats in wage negotiations, and that a Labour government would be able to use its close ties with the unions to keep wages in check without having a stand-up fight.

In fact, the opposite has happened; the Conservatives leaned only very lightly on the unions and Labour Ministers have used threats.

What the Labour Party's propaganda overlooked—not accidentally, of course—was that a Labour government would be committed to running capitalism, with all its conflicting interests—in this particular case the clash between workers and

employers over wages, hours and so on.

In face of this clash, and in face of the conditions of labour shortage which generally favour the workers when it comes to a fight, the exhortations and the threats which come in so steady a stream from Labour Ministers are powerless.

There is no cause to offer them any sympathy. They asked for power to try to run British capitalism. And they got it.

After all, the big reason why the Labour Party got where it is today is that it has never encouraged the working class to face the facts of capitalism. There is an especial irony in the fact that those same workers who in their ignorance put the Labour Party into power are now themselves, unwittingly or no, forcing a Labour government to face some of the unpleasant facts of the capitalist social system.

Letter: CONFUSION ABOUT RELIGION

Sir,

It appears that there is a lot of confused thinking amongst socialists on the subject of religion. It is not necessary here to go into the evidence there is to show that God exists, but if this is so, as millions believe, then He must exist forever—even under Socialism. Now, essentially religion should be an expression of this belief at all times regardless of what type of system we live under. It is grossly unfair that socialists should attempt to link up religion with capitalism by exaggerating, as your December 1965 issue does, examples from the history of religion in order to shake beliefs of people. And the sad thing about it is that these instances have no relevance at all to the true purpose and meaning of religion. Many traditional concepts and practices of religion may have to be reviewed, reinterpreted, condemned or even discarded without in any way affecting the real significance of religion.

Furthermore, if the existence of God is a reality, then how can you say, as you did

in your December issue, that "socialism involves a rejection of leadership" which I suppose includes religious leadership? Surely, religious leadership must exist even under socialism because the need for religion will not disappear then. It appears that socialists are determined to keep religion out of socialism. It is amusing to think that this is analogous to aeronautical engineers engaged in designing a plane but determined to disregard gravitational forces!

Socialist theory in relation to religion is based solely on certain practices in the name of religion in the past. In doing so they overlook the relevance and significance of the essentials of religion. This I think is the reason why socialism does not appear to be gaining momentum in certain European and many non European countries.

It is unfortunate that religious sentiments have been exploited at times for the ultimate triumph of capitalism, but need this be so, and need socialism and religion be incompatible?

Or, does the answer lie in the fact that

socialists themselves have not really understood the true meaning of religion perhaps because their knowledge of religion is confined to Christianity only and hence they tend to regard religion as something dispensable.

Capitalism may be an abominable system, but then, to me, Socialism with its exclusion of religion from its theory is totally outdated and irrelevant.

N. J. VERGEE, London, N.W.11.

REPLY

If Mr. Verjee wants to convince us that God exists, and will exist under Socialism, he really must do better than airily say that it is "not necessary here to go into the evidence . . ." For if there is no adequate evidence, there is no reason to say that God exists, and Mr. Verjee's case falls.

It is worthwhile, then, for us to go into

The passing show

Radio Rot

I have to make an admission that I do like listening to the radio—and watching the TV, too, when I get the chance, which as I don't have a TV set is not very often. Of course, you have to use discrimination in choice of programmes and learn to resist the mesmeric effect of the box. There is, after all, a little switch on one side and this must be firmly turned off if you are not to sit through programmes such as "Take Your Pick" with Michael Miles or "Juke Box Jury" with David Jacobs. This was a cruel lesson I learned when I *did* have a set, but maybe there was some value in watching them once or twice—a sort of immunisation process.

Of course, not all the radio and telly programmes are "light," at least not intentionally so. There are some pretty good documentary features which are useful as far as they go, and the B.B.C. does encourage *some* controversial discussions in programmes like "Any Questions." And they can be quite enjoyable providing you don't get too het up at the puerile questions which they deal with in all solemnity. If you are a Socialist, you will naturally feel it just that much more acutely.

For a Socialist is so very aware of the

really big problems of the world and how to solve them, that it must be like twisting the knife in a wound to hear the questions panel heatedly discussing whether Bernard Levin should be more polite or whether gambling winnings should be taxed. The piffling, inconsequential drivel that some of the "personalities" talk at a time when millions are starving and the world is dangerously close to a third big war, has to be heard to be believed. Even the "serious" commentators rarely get anywhere near a fundamental consideration of the way we live today.

But after all is said and done, it should be no more than we expect. The BBC, ITV, Pirate Pops as well, can only in the main reflect public interest and as we are all too painfully aware, this does not include a serious consideration of the Socialist case. Which is the real reason behind the consistent refusal of the powers-that-be to grant time on the air to our Party. When Socialist ideas are much more widely accepted and discussed we will not have to pester the authorities for a measly five minutes. They will be asking *us* instead.

Goodbye to the Afternoon Nap

It is just another of the many nasty tendencies of capitalism that it is con-

stantly on the lookout for opportunities to abolish or whittle down those of our leisurely customs which interfere with production and profits. In our December issue, we recalled how the 12 days of Christmas was very quickly reduced to one when the industrial revolution got under way, and although we get more than one day nowadays, it is nowhere near the original number. But even then, we were wrong to take it, according to some newspapers who seem to place the national productivity drive before all else.

Then again, some of our older readers may recall the circumstances under which pub licensing hours in this country were restricted. When my father was a boy, the public houses were usually open all day, some from 6am till midnight, but the First World War stopped all that. It was found that there was a tendency for munitions workers to spend their overtime earnings over the bar and to miss some of their shifts, so the licensing hours were severely curtailed and remained essentially so until fairly recently when there were minor revisions. Nothing really to do with any concern for our health—this time it was munitions production which caused the axe to be wielded.

(continued next page)

this "evidence". The case for religion is expressed entirely in terms of man's material environment and therefore reflects that environment. Thus as our knowledge of our environment has developed religious "evidence" has been forced to change its ground. This is why the Church in many parts of the world is now in turmoil, with prominent clerics challenging some of its most cherished beliefs and dogmas.

In any case, religion is nothing if it is not a faith; it should not rely on material evidence. To use Mr. Verjee's own example, a religious person should accept that, if God wills it, he could fly. It is the materialist who argues that man must first learn about gravity and all the other essentials of aeronautics. It is not faith, but material knowledge, which keeps men orbiting in space.

Socialists reject leadership of all kinds because Socialism can only be established by a politically conscious working class. When the workers in the mass have gained the knowledge needed to bring in Socialism

they will know how to act and will not need leaders to tell them how to think and what to do. This includes religious leaders, who cannot be seen in isolation from the world in which they operate. It should be remembered that, when they are not too busy making "infallible" statements on doctrine, men like the Pope and Aga Khan are mainly concerned with wielding the enormous political power which they have.

Religion has always supported property society, with all its oppressions, in one shape or another. Mr. Verjee asks "... need this be so . . . ?" but the fact is that religious leaders have always thought that it *should* be so. He should really be arguing with them, and not with us, on the point.

Mr. Verjee also mentions the "true meaning" and the "real significance" of religion. These are confusing and meaningless phrases, typical of much religious thinking. Almost every religious person has a different idea of the "true meaning" of his faith; and who is to say when we have come upon the "real significance" of religion? Hitler

had his ideas on the subject and so did the millions of Protestants, Catholics, Muslims etc. on both sides who were busily killing each other during the World Wars.

Socialists do not reject religion because of what Mr. Verjee calls "... certain practices in the name of religion in the past." We reject it because it does not fit the facts; it does nothing to explain man's environment; it offers a blind faith in the workings of a supernatural being in place of the materialist's scientific analysis which goes to the roots of social development and which stands up to practical examination.

Religion supports capitalism, as it supported other property societies, because it encourages people who are oppressed to suffer their burdens humbly, living in hopes of the after world. This is a confusing and misleading philosophy, and one which diverts the working class from what should be their first object—gaining the knowledge needed to set up a Socialist society of freedom, plenty and brotherhood.

THE PASSING SHOW // continued

No doubt you can think of other examples such as the shifting of May Day to the first Sunday in the month, and thus you might be inclined to think that it's a good job workers have struggled over the years to increase the paid holidays allowed by their individual employers.

Britain is not, of course, the only country where the cry is for more work and less leisure. You would never have thought that the afternoon siesta, such a part of life for those in hotter countries, would go; yet this is what looks like happening in Chile. The government there has decreed that the four hour lunch period be reduced to 30 minutes, and that all bars close between mid-day and 7pm each day.

Perhaps, as the *Evening Standard* editorial of January 8th pointed out, somewhat slyly, the indigestion pill manufacturers will do a roaring trade and the ruling class will get some increased production and profits. But for the Chilean workers it is the same sad story of the reduction of their leisure time and perhaps an increase in stomach ulcers. For as the *Evening Standard* also points out: "A half-hour hastily snatched lunch breeds ulcers faster than almost anything else in the world."

More New Year Hypocrisy

It was perhaps in the nature of capitalist politics that the late premier of India, Mr. Shastri, should receive praises and tributes following his death on January 11th. With China breathing

hotly down their necks, there had been strenuous efforts by USSR to patch up the India-Pakistani quarrel and Mr. Shastri's death occurred only a few hours after he had signed a peace agreement with the Pakistan president Ayub Khan.

Doubtless it came as a shock to various statesmen, not least the Soviet Prime Minister, Mr. Kosygin, but Shastri's demise is not likely to have any great or lasting effect on the world situation, despite the sloppy tributes of Harold Wilson and Lyndon Johnson. The U.S. President was true to his usual hypocritical form when he spoke of the news as "a tragic blow to the hopes of mankind for peace and progress."

Indeed, the history of Shastri's short term as Premier (a mere 18 months or so) has been anything but peaceful. In that time he had been involved in clashes with China and Pakistan and had openly stated that his government were considering the production of a nuclear bomb. Previously he served under Nehru, whose government went to war originally with Pakistan over the Kashmir issue, and not so long ago annexed Portuguese Goa. In dealing with striking workers, Shastri's government was just as brutal and repressive as its predecessors.

But all this you are not supposed to remember as canting politicians heap praise on the dead man's shoulders. And the tragedy of it is that many workers will indeed *not* remember, even though the events were all so very recent. It is the Socialist who will bear it all in mind and point out that despite his apparent gentleness as a person, Shastri

was one of Capitalism's politicians, and in that role, he was as much an enemy of the working class as Winston Churchill or Adolf Hitler.

Gaspers

"In 1960 nearly seven and a half million people in the United Kingdom were living in poverty, defined as below the National Assistance standard." (Report by Professors Smith and Townsend 23.12.65.)

"Mr. Jack Stone, who has resigned as managing director of Lloyds Packaging Warehouses, is reported to be in line for a Golden handshake 'well in excess of £50,000'." (Guardian 10.1.66.)

"Protecting this (copper) trade is not merely a matter of charity towards Zambia since about 45 per cent of Britain's copper comes from the Zambian mines." (Guardian report 7.1.66.)

"... Only by accepting a less ambitious full employment target will employment be brought under control." (Daily Telegraph editorial 10.1.66.)

"Aspro-Nicholas Ltd. said last night that it was prepared to send Oxfam and War on Want £250,000 worth of tablets which were being withdrawn from the market ..." (Guardian 11.1.66.)

"The Duchess of Norfolk is planning a banquet for 300 dogs in the grounds of Arundel Castle, to raise funds for a stray dog Sanctuary." (Guardian 10.1.66.)

"... Labour won the last election, and is proving a visibly non-Socialist party." (The Economist 8.1.66.)

"Christmas, for me, is out of this world." (The Bishop of Guildford in his Christmas Day broadcast.)

E.I.C.

BOOKS

Government

Insight into Government
by Lord Craigton, Pitman 21s.

This little book is intended as a primer for those who want to play the game of bourgeois politics. It is written by a Conservative peer for the benefit of "individuals and organizations who desire to exert influence on the British Government" in order to "get things done". The multitude of tedious activities with which Lord Craigton concerns himself are those aimed at the endless reform of capitalism. Naturally, the socialist movement - whose object is the establishment of a system of society on an

entirely different basis - is considered too trivial to warrant any consideration.

We can, however, endorse two of the points which Lord Craigton makes. Firstly, that the House of Commons is the seat of power in Great Britain. Secondly, that the state machinery of capitalist society is manned by paid officials and civil servants members of the working class. But his lordship is blissfully unaware of the irony of such a situation - where the working class loyalty runs capitalism in the interest of its capitalist masters and uses its voting power to perpetuate its own degraded status.

This book, then, contains little of any importance to the workers. Socialism will not be achieved by attempts at exerting pressure and influence on a government which has been elected for the declared purpose of administering British capitalism.

Those who fooled themselves into thinking otherwise are having this lesson painfully taught to them at present. But one useful fact does emerge from Lord Craigton's sketch of the machinery of government. If a majority of working men and women, equipped with a knowledge of what socialism is and how it may be realised, chose to elect socialist delegates to the national parliaments nothing could stand between them and the classless reorganisation of society. But the workers have no need to glean such information from Lord Craigton's over-priced book. Throughout this century the SPGB has been putting forward the case that, once a consciously organised working class has captured the coercive apparatus of the State, this may be converted into the agent of emancipation.

As long as working men look to their

Letter from Austria

Like many other parts of Europe, Austria has been celebrating a jubilee—the twentieth anniversary of "the liberation from the autocratic rule of Hitler Germany". We have for months past been reminded of the marvel of reconstruction, the rebuilding of the City of Vienna. In a thousand variations we have been told of the "Austrian Miracle", praised for our industry, the return of prosperity, and the country's great reputation in the world both East and West.

Remember the tragedy of Vienna, devastated by War and thrown into a chaotic state, without transport, gas, electric or water supplies. Women with pails and bottles trekked to the Vienna Woods to get water from the springs there, while old people and children ransacked the forest for fuel. In the city, the fire brigades just could not cope with the fires which raged everywhere. The police force ceased to function for a time and looting was rife. As the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* of April 27th last says:—

Deserted flats looted; the ordeal of tens of thousands of women outraged by demoralised and degraded *soldateska*; what the old and sick suffered in those days beggars description. With no hospital transport, the death rate rose enormously; the dead were packed in paper and transported on improvised vehicles to the cemetery, or unceremoniously interred in the nearest park.

And now we are bidden to admire the wonderful reconstruction, including that of the army, which celebrated the day of peace and freedom by holding the greatest military parade ever in Austria.

Had the collapse been caused by an earthquake or some other blind force of nature, bitter memories of the ordeal would understandably be eclipsed by the general satisfaction and pride in the speedy work of reconstruction. But it is the capitalist class who have good reason to rejoice. Indeed, eleven thousand of them can now show taxable incomes of a million schillings a year, while in Germany, the "patriotic zeal" has produced sixty-six thousand millionaires.

For the workers it was not so much the impulses of patriotic fervour as the urgent need to find employment and earn wages again, that compelled the destitute to take up any dirty and miserably paid jobs in the way of clearing up the mess and setting the factories and services going again. What indeed has the working class to show after those twenty years of toil? The same sort of poverty and insecurity as before the war; a *i.e.* worse housing problem, not to mention the fear of yet another war.

The question we should in any case ask is: Why had this tremendous work and painful healing of the awful wounds become necessary in the first place? The responsibility for the catastrophe must be sought within the structure of modern capitalism throughout the world—it was not due to some force in nature beyond the control of man. And so it should also be asked, if such horrors are foreseeable and preventable, why were they not prevented? Because quite clearly capitalism's top luminaries, the supposed experts on social affairs, are quite powerless to do so. The system they are run-

ning is bigger than they, which explains why they have not fulfilled their election pledges or solved any of the major social problems.

And when the war came along, they were caught up in its maelstrom and took an active part in, or helped to organise the orgies of massacre and devastation. Some also committed "atrocities" and were eventually tried, convicted and hanged. How then can the mass of humanity—the "non-expert" and "non-educated"—continue to trust leaders and "Personalities"? The answer is that they will do so, with continuing misery, until they realise that what they need are not "great men" but Socialist knowledge and the self reliance arising from it.

No blind forces of nature can be blamed for the destruction of Warsaw, Rotterdam, Stalingrad, Dresden, Hiroshima and Coventry, the devastation of London, Berlin and Vienna. Responsibility for this must rest squarely with world capitalism. This system exists for the profit of a privileged minority, not for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

Obviously, then, there is nothing surprising, mysterious or inexplicable if periodically such a system of inherent glaring contradictions and evils runs amuck and plays tricks on normally intelligent people, "intellectuals" and "non-intellectuals" alike, who operate, serve, and vote for it. It breeds war and strife in which the masters use every device to stimulate antagonism, and hatred between the world's workers who

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leaders and the apologists of capitalism for political inspiration they will stay where they are—propertyless wage earners at the whim of capital. When they choose to shake off their lethargy and work it out for themselves there'll be a different tale to tell. Until such time there will continue to be a market for such books as this.

Russia

An *Atlas of Soviet Affairs* by Robert N. Taaffe and Robert C. Kingsbury (Methuen, 7s. 6d)

This is the latest in a paperback series; others have been *Atlases of Africa* and of *World affairs*.

Maps are useful, indeed fascinating, things also be exciting, and can tell a story of more than a country's physical features.

An *Atlas of Soviet Affairs* illustrates the growth of the Russian state, from the Great Duchy of Moscow in the late 15th Century. It shows the steady Russian expansion into Europe and the Far East, the spheres of influence which the present great Soviet Union dominates and where it now conflicts with the United States.

There is one map which tells, with its arrows and dotted lines, of the deportations under Stalin of the Volga Germans, the Crimean Tatars and the North Caucasians. The text, in a stunning understatement, says that the deportations took place "... often with great loss of life..."

There is a lot to be learned from this

little book, of the Soviet Union's physical geography, its history, economy and communications. The idea behind it, if not new, is excellent; but the question is whether a paperback can do proper justice to it.

The authors are University professors in the United States. They are not misled by the all too common delusion that the conflict between Russia and America is one of ideology; they show that it is anything but.

The commentary alongside the maps is balanced and occasionally there is a flash of humour, grim or wry or sardonic; "... the abstention of Albania from COMECON is a relatively minor economic problem and is probably compensated for by the recent addition of the Mongolian People's Republic (Outer Mongolia)"

IVAN

Alcoholics numerous

Attention has been focussed recently on the "problem drinkers". Somebody has been counting their cost. In the December issue of *Business, the Management Journal*, it is claimed that the annual cost of alcoholism to British industry is £61 millions in absenteeism alone. It is claimed that of the total working population, two to three per cent are "problem drinkers". The same percentage is given also for America.

It is a typical piece of commercial cynicism to measure and describe a problem in money terms. Officially, the most disturbing aspect of widespread alcoholism is not the tragedy of people who require opiates to fortify their existence, but the loss of £61 million. Indeed, it is this loss that qualifies alcoholism as a problem.

Of course, employers will never rest in their attempts to find the ideal labour force. Workers are besieged by exhortations to be conscientious, sober, hard working, honest and thrifty. In short, workers are asked to practice all the so-called virtues of moral and political con-

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are to do the fighting.

As our pamphlet *The Racial Problem* so aptly put it:—

From the cradle to the grave, they are subjected to a mass of propaganda which deadens their minds, works on their prejudices, and endeavours by every means possible to turn their thoughts away from the real cause of their troubles—capitalism, with its wages and money system.

The WESTERN SOCIALIST

Journal for Socialism
in the
U.S.A. and Canada

6d bi-monthly

In this current issue

THE NORTHEAST BLACKOUT

NO MORE DEPRESSIONS?

BASIC ECONOMICS

WHAT IS MATERIALISM?

A MAO-IST MEETS A MARXIST

formity which assure their maximum exploitation as wage slaves. The curse of capitalism—for the capitalists—has always been that the units of labour power comprising the working class are also human beings. Regrettably they are not merely machines with brains; they are emotionally volatile, physically vulnerable; they give under pressure.

Addiction to alcohol is found at all levels of industry and commerce. The executive, the manager, the clerk, the shop floor operative. The kind of drink varies with the income bracket, from wines and spirits, beer, cheap wines, down to the cheapest of all, methylated spirits. The meths drinker has reached the stage of total degeneracy, derelict hulk, rather than a vital human being.

The meths drinkers are the most pathetic of all, lost in a twilight world of doped unreality. With personalities destroyed and contact with fellow human beings broken down, they are interrogated in decrepit cellars by naive social workers. Why were they sleeping rough? Had they no accommodation at all? Had they any money? Had they jobs? In their cases, the National Assistance Board is interested, again counting the cost of subsidising the unemployed.

It is typical that blame for alcoholism should be put on the individual. The very phrase "problem drinker" emphasises not the plight of the sufferer but his nuisance value. For the heavy drinker, alcohol becomes the buffer between his sober self and an intolerable reality. Alcohol in fact becomes a substitute for living. For the man who needs alcohol to see the day through, his drinks are the terms on which he is prepared to adjust himself to an existence that he despises. Though he may not be aware of it, alcohol is the repudiation of a life to which he sees no alternative. Unfortunately the disease easily generates its own momentum, sometimes ending in a complete personal capitulation to the meths bottle.

Nevertheless to the conventional moralist, the individual is completely in the wrong. In those who are worried about the money cost of alcoholism, there is no criticism of society. It is the individual who must conform; if he does not or cannot, then at best he is lazy or weak, lacking in the necessary will to make the adjustment.

Alcohol is only one of the substitutes that men grasp in their flight from reality. There are others. Suicide and mental illness are equally results of the

emotional stress that capitalist society imposes on humanity. The existence of all these problems is part of man's unconscious protest against a society that not only denies his needs but actively destroys him.

The term "social workers" is an exquisite euphemism for individuals who are attempting to minimise the cost of capitalism's worst effects. Even so, their work is useful in documenting the incidence of such problems as alcoholism. To put these facts in perspective, it is necessary to clear away such concepts as "problem drinkers", "social misfits", etc. This phraseology by itself places the onus of responsibility on the individual. It fails to relate the incidence of alcoholism to the social pressures bearing on the individual. It implicitly encourages the view of the individual as a failure rather than a possible victim. In fact, by endorsing the *status quo*, this view of the problem guarantees its continuance. The use of phrases like "social failures" partly contributes to the problem. Surely it is this background of successes and failures, the empty competitive values of propertied society from which people seek a refuge in drink.

In the short term, the incidence of alcoholism will probably increase. Capitalism cannot avoid a continuing ferment of discontent, albeit generally expressed in negative ways, through hate, violence, cynicism and even despair. Paradoxically, this may form a background for building up useful knowledge about where man's true interests lie.

P.L.

"Loan to Lawson" continued

were getting less than £1,000 and 25 million were getting less than £1,500 per year. If we average this out, it means that 80 per cent. were receiving an income equal to the amount paid by Mr. Lawson in mortgage interest, whereas his income, if the Councillor's figures are correct, place him in the top 129,000, or the top 1 per cent. of the income table.

That "some are more equal than others" is true not only in Kensington and Chelsea but throughout the land. But perhaps the last word should go to Mr. Lawson, who wrote his first column as the new editor of "Spectator" on 7th January 1966; after all, he said, the Council will be making a profit from the mortgage they granted him. What more could a Tory ask, or give.

RAY GUY

House loan to Nigel Lawson

The Conservative Party champions the cause of those who support the unequal society. They justify this by asserting that some individuals achieve success because they have an ability greater than others. They hold that this success entitles them to a larger share of the material things of life. I have often wondered if it were not possible to put a figure or ratio to this allegedly justifiable difference in consumption. It now appears from the housing committee of the Conservative Kensington and Chelsea Council that a reasonable ratio is of the order of 50 : 1.

In this borough of the Greater London Council, embracing the highly fashionable Hyde Park Gate and the highly condemnable Notting Hill area, Mr. Nigel Lawson is buying a house. He is the new editor of "Spectator", a former financial journalist and speech writer for Sir Alec Douglas Home. The house in Hyde Park Gate was valued by the Council at £34,000. The value placed on a property by a building society, local council or any other lending body is generally about 85 per cent. of the current market price, which leaves the lender

a margin if the mortgagor should default on the repayments, when the property would have to be sold quickly. In order to complete his purchase, Mr. Lawson, or his agents, applied to the Kensington and Chelsea Council for a mortgage of £20,000. And got it.

The Labour Party opposition on the Council objected to the loan. Firstly they claimed the money could have been better advanced on say five £4,000 mortgages, or, alternatively, it could have been loaned to one of the borough's housing associations, who could have utilised the money to house 50 people.

So there we have it: a loan to Mr. Lawson or a loan to 50 other people via a housing association. To take sides in this squabble is entirely to miss the point, which is that the housing shortage is one aspect of the general problem of poverty.

When questioned about the housing problem, the Socialist Party of Great Britain has often given the quick answer, to better illustrate the question, that the housing problem is only a problem for the working class, and has instanced the voluminous advertisements for houses for

sale in the press. It is a shortage of money rather than houses that prevents most people from buying a house in a society that builds houses for sale rather than occupation. Despite all the talk of the affluent society, it remains a fact that a large section of the working class cannot afford the price of accommodation. As with any other necessity under capitalism, housing is available only within the limitations of a profit making system.

Mr. Lawson's £20,000 mortgage carries interest at 6½ per cent. repayable over twenty years. A Councillor who wrote to the "Guardian" estimated that in order to qualify for the loan, Mr. Lawson must have an income of at least £8,000 per year and that the interest factor in the yearly repayments will be £1,256, upon which there will be relief from income tax and sur-tax of £840. So much for beer guzzling layabouts in council houses being the only recipients of subsidies.

In August 1965, HMSO published the table of personal incomes for 1963, which shows that of the 27 million individuals in receipt of personal income, 20 million

(continued on previous page)

JOE CLARKE

Nottingham Branch members, have suffered a very great loss, by the death of our friend and comrade, Joe Clarke.

Joe was the last of three brothers, all dedicated Socialists, and Party members over 38 years, who lived at Burton on Trent. Their role in the Party did not bring them into great prominence, for they were neither speakers nor writers; the work they did was that performed by the persistent plodders, whom the Party could not do without. Selling literature, discussing and exchanging socialist ideas wherever possible, collecting funds to finance Party propaganda, and last but not least, attending political meeting to question and challenge the veracity of statements made by capitalist politicians.

Joe was able to talk quite freely on politics, economics, philosophy, science and space, astronomy, and a subject uncommon, but nevertheless one which he felt to be important: "health culture". In pursuit of good health Joe took a daily dip in the River Trent, winter and summer, during the whole of his adult life, and was a vegetarian. Indeed, he did survive many illnesses in his later years and these were contracted no doubt through cycling long journeys, in all weather, while doing Party work.

Although he was 79 years of age when he died, many of his comrades and friends

thought he would go on for ever for he was virile and strong, and carried on his usual activities until his last days.

Men of Joe's calibre are difficult to replace, but there is no doubt that the work that Joe did for the Party with such great enthusiasm will give inspiration to those left behind to carry on the struggle.

J. CUTHBERTSON.

BILLY ILES

In December a group of members attended a crematorium in Guildford, Surrey, to say a last and sad farewell to an old comrade, O. C. Iles, who had been ill for some time with cancer.

Billy Iles, as he was always known to us, joined the Party in 1911 and was active for years in London as a writer, speaker and doing the routine work at Head Office, until his work finally took him to Liverpool.

He was called up during the First World War but refused to join the army. He managed to keep out of trouble during the war, although he never left London, by taking various jobs on night work at Covent Garden, as a milkman, and the like. He lodged for a time with a woman member, Mrs. Chilton, along with other members "on the run"; later with another member in a flat over Head Office until the war was

over. In those days we used to collect the *Socialist Standard* in loose sheets from the printer and folded them ourselves. Billy Iles made many trips to the printer for this purpose and spent many nights folding so that the "S.S." could be out on time.

After the war times were somewhat turbulent and meetings were inclined to be noisy. On one Bank Holiday Billy cycled all night up to Hanley in the Potteries, to hold a meeting during the coal strike in 1921.

During the twenties he was secretary to the Editorial Committee and wrote articles over the initials O.C.I.

Owing to the fact that he lived out of London we did not see much of him during late years, but his optimism and steadfast support continued all through the years and he sent many useful organisational suggestions to Head Office.

The present writer will always remember Billy as a lively and humorous companion on many cycling trips in years gone by.

His illness was a heavy burden to his wife as he only went into hospital during his last few days. To his wife, daughter and brother we send our sincere sympathy.

And so has passed away another of the diminishing group of members, who now only number a handful, who actively pressed forward the Party's principles before and during the years of the First World War.

GILMAC.

Meetings

HEAD OFFICE

A series of lectures and discussions at
52 Clapham High Street, London
SW4

Thursdays 8 pm

At the following three meetings a representative of the organisations named will provide the main speaker. A member of the SPGB will reply from the platform followed by questions and discussion.

3rd February

ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

10th February

MOVEMENT FOR COLONIAL

FREEDOM

17th February

LOCAL IMMIGRANT GROUP

24th February

SOCIALISM AND RACE

PUBLIC MEETING

Islington
Co-op Hall, 127 Seven Sisters Road,
N.7

Thursday, 10th March, 8 pm

INDONESIA,
MALAYSIA
THE CONFRONTATION

WELWYN GARDEN CITY

Blackhorse Room, Handside Lane
Monday, 14th February, 8 pm

DISCUSSION

VIETNAM AND RHODESIA

STEVENAGE

Bedwell Centre, Bedwell Crescent
Monday, 21st February, 8 pm

IRISH REBELS AND THEIR

CAUSES

Speaker: A. Fahy

ST. ALBANS

Peathers Hotel, London Road
Monday, 28th February, 8 pm

REVOLUTION NOT PROTEST

Speaker: Tom Giles

PUBLIC MEETING

HAMMERSMITH TOWN HALL,
THURSDAY 17th FEBRUARY

8 pm

World without money

Speaker: C. May

SOCIALIST STANDARD: Published by the
Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham
High Street, London, S.W.4. Printed by
R. E. Taylor & Son Ltd. (T.U.), 57 Bunner
Street, London, E.C.1.

GLASGOW MEETINGS

Woodside Public Halls
Sundays 7.30 pm

THE GLASGOW STORY

February 6th

THE BIRTH OF GLASGOW

Speaker: I. Richmond

February 13th

THE MYTH OF RED CLYDE

Speaker: J. Higgins

February 20th

THE CATHOLIC-PROTESTANT

FORCE

Speaker: R. Donnelly

February 27th

CRISES ON THE CLYDESDALE

Speaker: C. McEwen

GLASGOW STUDY CLASSES

Thursdays 8 pm, Branch Rooms
163a Berkeley Street

THE TECHNIQUE OF ARGUMENTATION

February 3rd

HOW TO ARGUE (2)

February 10th

HOW TO ARGUE (3)

SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA

February 17th

SOURCES FOR LECTURES

February 24th

HOW TO PREPARE A LECTURE

March 3rd

PUBLIC DEBATES

March 10th

DELIVERY

KIDDERMINSTER

Station Inn, Farwick
Comberton Road
Wednesdays 7.30 pm

February 9th

HOW TO ESTABLISH SOCIALISM

HACKNEY

Hackney Trades Hall, Valletta St., E9
(facing Hackney Empire)
Wednesdays, 8.30 pm

February 9th

THE WASTE MAKERS

Speaker: C. May

February 23rd

SOCIALISM VERSUS RELIGION

Speaker: J. Law

KENSINGTON BRANCH

DISCUSSION

MODERN ASPECTS OF PACIFISM

Speaker from the

Peace Pledge Union

Friday 18th February 8 pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WC1

CENTRAL LONDON

Asquith Room, 2 Soho Square, W1
Sundays 8 pm (doors open 7.30 pm)

February 6th

BACKGROUND TO MODERN

TURKEY

Speaker: E. Grant

February 13th

FREUD AND MARXISM

Speaker: R. Cook

February 20th

"THE RIGHT ROAD FOR

BRITAIN"

Speaker: C. May

February 27th

GEORGE ORWELL: 1934 IN 1966?

Speaker: R. Critchfield

March 6th

WOMEN AND CAPITALISM

Speaker, K. Graham

LEWISHAM MEETINGS

Co-op Hall, 2 Davenport Road
(Room 1)
Calford, SE6

Monday 8.30 pm

February 14th

PRICES AND INCOMES POLICY

Speaker: E. Hardy

February 28th

KIBBUTZ CAPITALISM IN ISRAEL

Speaker: K. Yudt

March 21st

IRISH TROUBLES OF THE 1920's

Speaker: R. Critchfield

PADDINGTON AND MARYLEBONE

The Royal Oak, York Street, W1
(near Marylebone Station)
Wednesdays 9 pm

February 2nd

ART IN SOCIALIST SOCIETY

Speaker: I. Jones

February 9th

RANDOM COMMENTS ON

HISTORY FOR SOCIALISTS

Speaker: N. A. Asaki

February 16th

REVIEW OF THE FEBRUARY SS

LONDON OUTDOOR MEETINGS

Sundays

Hyde Park, 3 and 6 pm

East Street, Walworth

February 6th and 20th (11 am)

February 13th (noon)

February 27th (1 pm)

February 27th (1 pm)

Mondays

Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1.2 pm

Thursdays

Tower Hill, 12.30 pm